



Relationship among Lecturers' Work Conditions, Work Ethics and Undergraduate Students' Academic Achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study assessed the relationship among lecturers' work conditions, work ethics and undergraduate students' academic achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. It was guided by two research questions with corresponding objectives and hypotheses. The research design used for this study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 5844 academic staff. The sample size of the study consisted of 1461 respondents. The instrument used for data collection was validated and it yielded 0.74 as the validity index. It was pilot tested and 0.76 was obtained as the reliability index. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study indicated that there is a significant relationship between lecturers' workload and work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria and there is a significant relationship between lecturers' workload and undergraduates students' academic achievement in Federal Universities of North

Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. The study recommended that to improve the academic achievement of undergraduate students in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria, a few courses should be assigned to lecturers to enable them to teach the students diligently to avoid the stress that comes with much workload that induces poor academic achievement among undergraduate students.

Keywords: Lecturers' Work Conditions, Work Ethics, Undergraduate Academic Achievement and Workload

Introduction

The management of the activities of lecturers in the University system in Nigeria for high productivity depends on the nature of working conditions as the lecturers play important roles towards the attainment of the overall goals of University education. The working conditions of lecturers in Nigerian Universities seem to be inadequate owing to the incessant strikes embarked on by the Academic Staff Union of Universities in the country Stanislas (2016) conducted a study and concluded that working conditions do not favourably affect the work ethics of academic staff at Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe. Indeed, among the several factors that could sustain the stability of the University setting is the provision of adequate working conditions. Arum and Mirza (2017) described working conditions as the effort of employers to provide within the existing industrial system suitable working situations for employees based on the laws and organizational norms that may help to induce a high level of

commitment among staff. The working conditions of lecturers in Nigerian Universities are designed by the National Universities Commission (NUC) through a series of procedures, laws, policies, regulations and processes to ensure that the goals and objectives of University education are achieved (Ubom, 2017). The working conditions of lecturers in Universities are numerous among which are the reward system, training and development, leave allowance, job security, promotion, appraisal and disciplinary measures. The essence of providing adequate working conditions for staff in a University is to ensure that they adhere to the work ethics of the institution. Stanislas (2016) maintained that working conditions do not favourably affect the work ethics of academic staff at Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe.

Every occupation has a work ethic. As such, the University system is not an exception. The term ethics originated from the Greek word 'ethos' which

means "character". Ethics is concerned with the study of what is good and bad. It constitutes part of the elements of human virtue, attitude, behaviour, words and actions displayed by lecturers in the process of performing their academic responsibilities. It focuses on honesty and fairness which define the relationship of lecturers with students. It encompasses the right and wrong conduct exhibited by lecturers in the University system. Ethical behaviour occurs when one acts with equity, fairness and impartiality and respects the rights of others, or simply put when one does what is morally right. On this note, lecturers in Universities are expected to be impartial when dealing with all students to enable them to learn and obtain high academic achievement (Ogunleye, 2015).

Stakeholders in the Nigerian educational system ranging from parents, guardians, lecturers, family members, counsellors, and employers of labour among others are concerned about the academic achievement of students in Universities, especially, as many graduates seem to be underperforming in the labour markets (Nwaze, 2017). Students' academic achievement attribute is measured by test scores and other forms of assessments. Academic achievement is the overall student performance in different school disciplines as exhibited by individual students. It is the general ability in the intellectual, social and physical well-being of students. The academic achievement of students could be used to grade students based on First, Second and Third Class degrees respectively. It is the measurement of educational output obtained by students from different courses they offer every semester (Adeyemi, 2016). However, as students progress from one level to another, a complex interaction of some factors such as personal, social, academic and institutional activities tends to influence the quality of their academic achievement. The issue of poor academic achievement of students in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone seems to occur as a result of poor working conditions which induce lecturers to exhibit some unethical behaviour with ineffective teaching.

Furthermore, the workload allocated to lecturers constitutes part of the working conditions that may influence work ethics and students' academic achievement in the University setting. The workload is the number of courses and other responsibilities assigned to lecturers to perform within a given period (Iyala, Ahmad, Yusuf & Ayom, 2023). The greater the workload, the lower the zeal, strength and efficiency for quality job performance and vice-versa. In this regard, lecturers with high workloads may find it difficult to observe the ethics of the teaching profession and teach the students to obtain high academic achievement. Responsibilities are assigned to lecturers based on their educational backgrounds, academic qualifications and working experience. Abdus and Ghulam (2012) conducted a study and found that a significant impact exists between teachers' workload and students' performance at the University of Gujrat, Pakistan.

In Universities, too much workload arises when a lecturer is assigned more responsibilities than the required benchmark stated by the NUC. To determine the workload for lecturers, the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2012) specified one credit unit to be equivalent to; (a) eight hours of lecture per week, (b) two hours of seminar, (c) three hours of laboratory or fieldwork, clinical practice and practicum or stadium sporting activity, (d) six hours of teaching practice and (e) one week of industrial attachment. To help in the determination of the normal workload of academic staff by Universities, the NUC approved the following guidelines which serve as a basis for measuring the maximum and minimum workload for academic staff: a full-time lecturer needs to be given a minimum teaching credits load of 8 units per semester including post-graduate teaching. However, the minimum teaching credits load for science-based courses is 6 lecture hours and 2 to 3 hours of laboratory practical work every week.

The arts-based courses are required to be allocated with a minimum of 6 credit hours and 1 or 2 tutorials per week. It was also proposed that responsibilities such as student admission exercise, student registration and timetable scheduling should be credited at the rate of 5 hours of excess workload per week for a maximum of 2 weeks per session. Lecturers in Nigerian Universities' settings including those in the North Central Geopolitical Zone are bonded by the 1999 agreement between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government which provided that 'there shall be excess workload allowances to be payable to academic staff where applicable' (ASUU, 2010). The agreement described excess workload as the responsibilities that are above the normal workload or credit hours assigned to lecturers (Osaat & Ekechukwu, 2014). Considering the above analysis, it seems, every lecturer in Federal Universities in North Central Geopolitical Zone is overloaded with more responsibilities as each lecturer sometimes teaches almost all the students in the various levels. Such a situation may weigh the affected lecturers down and induce unethical behaviour of dishonesty and recalcitrant behaviour that would prevent them from performing their job effectively to enable students to graduate with good grades (Dauda & Mohammed, 2012).

Lecturers in Federal Universities seem to be overburdened with much credit load. The extra workload is expected to be rewarded with the payment of Earned Allowances. However, the situation seems to be different as the Academic Staff Union of Universities has demanded the payment of accumulated Earned Academic Allowance unpaid for some years by the government to its members. The issue of unpaid allowances seems to influence some lecturers to embark on unethical practices of absconding from their official responsibilities to undertake businesses that would help them raise additional funds to complement their salary (Iyala, Ogbo & Usman, 2023). Lecturers with the above unethical conduct may find it difficult to teach the students

to graduate with good grades and perform well in the labour market. The desire to compensate themselves for the excess workload has induced some lecturers to embark on unethical behaviour of promoting examination malpractices, extortion of money from students and secretly selling handouts. The above problems necessitated this study that assessed the nature of lecturers' work conditions, work ethics and undergraduate students' academic achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria seem to be suffering from the problem of an inadequate number of lecturers, as a result, the few available lecturers are overloaded with too much workload. Among the responsibilities of lecturers in the University system are teaching, researching, marking scripts, and supervising students' projects among others. Such numerous responsibilities performed by lecturers in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria induces poor working conditions. As a result, lecturers are bound to easily embark on unethical conduct or dishonesty in performing their assigned responsibilities. Lecturers in Federal Universities seem to be overburdened with much credit load. The extra workload is expected to be backed up with the payment of Earned Allowances. However, the situation seems to be different as the Academic Staff Union of Universities, has demanded the payment of accumulated Earned Academic Allowance unpaid for some years by the government to its members. The issue of unpaid allowances seems to influence some lecturers to embark on unethical practices of absconding from their official responsibilities to undertake businesses that would help them raise additional funds to complement their salary. Lecturers with the above conduct may not teach the students to graduate with good grades and perform well in the labour market. The desire to compensate themselves for the excess workload has induced some lecturers to embark on unethical behaviour of promoting examination malpractices and extortion of money from students. It was based on the above problems that this study was conducted to investigate the interrelationship among lecturers' work conditions, work ethics and undergraduate students' academic achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between lecturers' workload and work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria?

2. What is the relationship between lecturers' workload and undergraduates Students' academic achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The study achieved the specific objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between lecturers' workload and work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.
2. To examine the relationship between lecturers' workload and Undergraduates students' academic achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between lecturers' workload and work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

HO₂: Significant relationship does not exist between lecturers' workload and undergraduate students' academic achievement in federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Research Methodology

The research design that guided this study was the descriptive survey research design. The population of this study consisted of 5844 academic staff obtained from 68 faculties in all the seven Federal Universities in North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. The sample size of this study consisted of 1461 respondents drawn from 37 Faculties using 50%. The lucky-dip method of simple random sampling was employed to select the actual respondents for the study. The instrument for data collection was tagged 'Lecturers' Work Conditions, Work Ethics and Undergraduates Students' Academic Achievement Questionnaire' (WEUSAAQ). The instrument was validated and it yielded 0.74 as the validity index. The instrument produced a reliability index of 0.76. The respondents rendered 41 (2.80%) copies of the questionnaires invalid. Therefore, the remaining valid 1420 copies of questionnaires were used for data analysis of the study. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to test hypotheses.

Results

Descriptive statistics of the mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and the results are presented in Table 1-2 below:

Research Question One: What is the relationship between lecturers' workload and work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis Showing Lecturers' Workload and Work Ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std.	Decision
		6						
1.	Lecturers are honest in performing their assigned responsibilities due to much workload allocated to them.	535	460	200	225	2.55	0.40	Agreed
2.	Lecturers experience stress and engage in illicit behaviour when the official responsibilities assigned to them are not within their working strengths.	500	535	150	210	2.65	0.50	Agreed
3.	Lecturer-students' ratio is too high to encourage the spirit of enthusiasm and effective teaching by the academic staff in the University.	475	560	165	220	2.78	0.45	Agreed
4.	Lecturers have high morale for effective job performance despite the too much workload allocated to them.	600	365	300	125	2.80	0.62	Agreed
5.	Lecturers are restless and behave in unprofessional manners while performing their jobs due to much responsibility	125	200	515	380	2.25	0.49	Disagreed

	given to them by the University.								
6.	Lecturers adhere to the principles of teaching in the University system as they do not struggle to cope with the much responsibility assigned to them.	465	530	225	200	2.90	0.44	Agreed	
Cluster Mean						2.65	0.48	Agreed	

Scale Mean 2.50

Table 1 revealed that item 1 has the mean value of 2.55 and standard deviation of 0.40, item 2 has the mean value of 2.65 and standard deviation of 0.50, item 3 has the mean value of 2.78 and standard deviation of 0.45, item 4 has the mean score of 2.80 and standard deviation of 0.62, item 5 has the mean value of 2.25 and standard deviation of 0.49 and item 6 has the mean value of 2.90 and standard deviation of 0.44. Since the cluster mean value of 2.65 is above the scale mean of 2.50, this, therefore, means that the respondents agreed that there is high lecturers workload which reduces their compliance to work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between lecturers’ workload and undergraduate Students’ academic achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis Showing Lecturers’ Workload and Undergraduates Students’ Academic Achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std.	Decision
								6
7.	The high workload allocated to lecturers prevents them from observing the basic ethics of the teaching profession need to	500	485	2350	200	2.58	0.68	Agreed

	enhance effective job performance and good academic results among students.								
8.	Low academic achievement among students occurs as a result of the high rate of workload allocated to lecturers that induce low productivity among them.	550	575	160	110	2.66	0.76	Agreed	
9.	Anxiety among lecturers due to high rate of workload reduces the level of their productivity needed to boost the academic achievement of students.	505	530	175	210	2.76	0.79	Agreed	
10.	Many lecturers easily get tire and inefficiently teach the students due to physical stress that arises from too much workload assigned to them.	500	495	280	105	2.70	0.72	Agreed	
11.	Uncontrollable stress arising from too much responsibility influences health problems among lecturers that lead to low productivity and poor academic achievement by students.	610	385	115	110	2.69	0.75	Agreed	

12.	There is unethical behaviour of dishonesty among lecturers which prevents them from performing their job effectively to enable students to graduate with good grades.	565	540	95	220	2.80	0.71	Agreed
Cluster Mean		2.69 0.73 Agreed						

Scale Mean 2.50

Table 2 shows that item 7 has the mean score of 2.58 and standard deviation of 0.68, item 8 has the mean score of 2.76 and standard deviation of 0.76, item 9 has the mean score of 2.76 and standard deviation of 0.79, item 10 has the mean score of 2.70 and standard deviation of 0.72, item 11 has the mean score of 2.69 and standard deviation of 0.7 and item 12 has the mean score of 2.80 and standard deviation of 0.71. The details of the analysis showed that the cluster mean of 2.69 is above the scale mean of 2.50, as such, the respondents agreed that lecturers are assigned with high workload which induces low academic achievement among undergraduate students in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Testing of Hypotheses

All the hypotheses were tested using Pearson’s product moment correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The details of the analyses are presented in Table 3-4 below:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between lecturers’ workload and work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Table 3: Correlation Coefficient Analysis Showing the Relationship between Lecturers’ Workload and Work Ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria

Variable	N	Df	Mean	r-cal	r-tab	Level of Sig	Decision
(\bar{X})							
Lecturers’ Workload	1420	1418	2.60	0.83	0.196	0.05	Rejected
Work Ethics							

Table 3 indicates the correlation coefficient of significant relationship between lecturers' workload and work ethics in Federal Universities in North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. The analysis of the results demonstrated that the r-calculated value is 0.83 while the r-table value is 0.196 at significant level of 0.05 and 1418 as degree of freedom. Since the calculated value of 0.83 is above the table value of 0.196, the null hypothesis was rejected which means that there is a significant relationship between lecturers' workload and work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Significant relationship does not exist between lecturers' workload and undergraduate students' academic achievement in federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Table 4: Correlation Coefficient Analysis Showing the Relationship between Lecturers' Workload and Undergraduates Students' Academic Achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria

Variable	N	Df	Mean (\bar{X})	r-cal	r-tab	Level of Sig	Decision
Lecturers' Workload	1420	1418	2.56	0.80	0.196	0.05	Rejected
Undergraduates Students' Academic Achievement							

Table 4 shows the correlation coefficient of significant relationship between lecturers' workload and undergraduate students' academic achievement in Federal Universities in North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. The analysis of the results demonstrated that the r-calculated value is 0.80 while the r-table value is 0.196 at the significant level of 0.05 and 1418 as degree of freedom. Since the calculated value of 0.80 is above the table value of 0.196, the null hypothesis was rejected which implies that there is a significant relationship between lecturers' workload and undergraduate students' academic achievement in federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study include:

1. The findings of hypothesis one indicated that there is a significant relationship between lecturers' workload and work ethics in Federal Universities of North

Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria since the r-calculated value of 0.83 is above the r-table value of 0.196.

2. The findings of hypothesis two showed that there is a significant relationship between lecturers' workload and undergraduate students' academic achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. The details of the analysis revealed that the r-calculated value of 0.80 is above the r-table value of 0.196.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of hypothesis one indicated that there is a significant relationship between lecturers' workload and work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. The findings of the study disagreed with Stanislas (2016) who maintained that working conditions do not favourably affect the work ethics of academic staff at Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe. The workload allocated to lecturers constitutes part of the working conditions that may influence work ethics and students' academic achievement in the University setting. The greater the workload, the lower, the zeal, strength and efficiency for quality job performance and vice-versa. From the findings of this study, lecturers are given a high workload which makes it difficult for them to observe the ethics of the teaching profession and teach the students to obtain good academic achievement. Responsibilities are assigned to lecturers based on their educational backgrounds, academic qualifications and working experience. In Universities, too much workload arises when a lecturer is assigned more responsibilities than the required benchmark stated by the NUC. Considering the above analysis, it is quite unfortunate as every lecturer in Federal Universities in North Central Geopolitical Zone is overloaded with more responsibilities as each lecturer sometimes teaches almost all the students in the various levels. Such a situation may weigh the affected lecturers down and induce unethical behaviour of dishonesty and recalcitrant behaviour that would prevent them from performing their job effectively to enable students to graduate with good grades.

The findings of the study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between lecturers' workload and undergraduate students' academic achievement in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. The findings of the study agreed with Abdus and Ghulam (2012) who found that a significant impact exists between teacher's workload and students' performance at the University of Gujrat, Pakistan. Workloads are the responsibilities and tasks assigned to workers perform in various Universities. Teaching is a difficult task and demands a serious commitment to enhance the academic achievement of students. The activities that constitute the workload of lecturers and are linked to the academic achievement of students include evaluation of students through tests, assignments and examinations, and teaching

extends to the marking of examination scripts and production of results. It is difficult for lecturers to be efficient and effective in performing their teaching responsibilities to facilitate high academic achievement among students in the face of much workload assigned to them. Stress arising from too much workload may lead to some diseases such as cardiac arrest, mental disorder, and hypertension that could prevent lecturers from achieving performing their job effectively. Apart from responsibilities, too much workload may lead to the sudden death of some lecturers and leave students stranded. When a normal workload is assigned to lecturers, there is the tendency that they would be effective in performing the duties, however, when the workload is much there is the likelihood that they may not perform their duties well and the end result is poor academic achievement by students.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study:

The study concluded that a high workload is allocated to lecturers and this has reduced their compliance to work ethics in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria. The study equally concluded that there is low academic achievement among undergraduates students in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria as a result of too much workload assigned to lecturers.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. The study recommended that workload should be allocated to lecturers based on the compulsory course load of eight credit units for HODs, six for Deans, nine for Professor and 12 for Senior lecturers respectively as approved by the NUC and any lecturer who fails to comply with the work ethics of the University system should face the disciplinary committee and be disciplined accordingly as such measures would help lecturers to adhere to the work ethics of the university system.
2. To improve the academic achievement of undergraduate students in Federal Universities of North Central Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria, a few courses should be assigned to lecturers to enable them to teach the students diligently to avoid the stress that comes with much workload that induces poor academic achievement among undergraduate students.

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